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UN-BECOMING. AN UNEVEN NOTE ON MEILLASSOUX AND DELEUZE

PHILOFICTION   CONTINGENCY, CORRELATIONISM, DELUEZE, HYER–CHAOS, UN–BECOMING

1. **Introduction, or gesturing towards the outside**

Critchley recounts an interesting story about Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, Ayer and Ambrosini (a physicist influenced by Bataille) sitting in a bar at 2 a.m., Bataille's lecture "The Consequences of Nonknowledge" scheduled for the next morning (cf. Critchley 2008). Suddenly Ayer – devoted to a form of scientific realism – comes forth with the simple but controversial assertion, that the sun Bataille keeps talking about had existed before the advent of humans. Ayer's three interlocutors however did not agree at all. This event is significant, because it demonstrates, as Wilson says the "Petrarchan conceit *par excellence*" (Wilson 2013, 103) of a continental tradition, schooled as the group in the bar was in Hegel and phenomenology, when confronted with a realist; they are willing to eradicate the existence of the sun, if it does not appear for and in human cognition.

As Ireland once put it, realism has been regarded in the 20th century continental tradition as either a folly

championed by those naïve enough to uphold the correspondence theory of truth only evidenced by what appears, hence conflating appearance and reality ontologically, or as a pre-Kantian epistemological trap and outmoded model of attaining knowledge (cf. Ireland 2018). Following the "Copernican Revolution" and Kant's limitation of experience and knowledge to the condition of transcendental apperception and hence the functions of the pure forms of intuitions and the categories of judgement, "we can never know the reality of things-in-themselves because their appearance is always mediated by our perception of them: the in-itself is always already a for-us." (Ireland 2018)

Meillassoux' *After Finitude* (*AF*) must be considered first and foremost as not simply an attack on the critical philosophy of Kant and its post-Kantian proliferation, but as an historical event itself in its reaction to the crisis of the notion of the absolute in contemporary philosophy or in its being such a crisis (Avanessian/Malik 2016, 2). It reformulates the aforementioned Kantian restriction into the pervasive idea, that the "world is only meaningful" only insofar as it is "given to-a-living (or thinking)-being" (Meilassoux 2006, 15). This credo gets translated into the basic formula of what he calls correlationism: "there can be no X without the givenness of X, and no theory of X without a positing X" (Meillassoux 2014, 2). The first part of *AF* is mainly concerned with the establishment and demonstration of the claim, that such a correlationist assumption is still operative in 20th century and contemporary philosophy and has to be overcome. He distinguishes for this purpose between a weak correlationism, which, while acknowledging an outside of the correlation, denies all positive knowledge of such a 'great outdoors' if not restricted to the givenness for human cognition, and a strong correlationism, which absolutizes the correlation itself, not only denying positive knowledge but the existence of an in-itself beyond or outside the correlation it upholds to be absolute. Following from his discussion of the correlation, the main part of the book is concerned with an attack on the principle of sufficient reason. Taking Heidegger's approach to the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* as a decisive turning point on the question of metaphysics itself, we can situate Meillassoux' efforts more clearly. While Heidegger's rejection of metaphysics as onto-theology is mirrored in *After Finitude* as the necessity to dispose of fideism, the more profound critique of Heidegger, pitting the principle of sufficient reason as an original sin of metaphysics in the West, is reflected in Meillassoux' judgment about metaphysics tout court: "metaphysics culminates in the ontological argument, viz. in the claim, that this or that entity must absolutely be *because* it is the way it is" (Meillassoux 2006, 22).

It is therefore rather surprising at first glance, as Bell notes (cf. Bell 2015, 52), that Deleuze becomes not only an interlocutor to Meillassoux, but the former's vitalism becomes a point of fundamental critique. Considering, that Deleuze has been read in recent studies on him as a realist avant la lettre[i], that both Meillassoux and Deleuze are hyper-Humeans, that both reject therefore classical notions of metaphysics as ontotheology and concepts of possibility and reality and that both are in favor of a notion of immanence, the opposition seems all the more vexing. It is therefore worthwhile to reconstruct the critique of Deleuze issued by Meillassoux to clarify and enliven the contemporary discourse on Speculative Realism and it's discontents. We will do so, by first tracing the argument for the principle of unreason proposed in *AF,* to then illustrate the (actual and possible) points of contention with Deleuzean vitalism from this perspective. Ultimately, we want to engage Deleuze and Meillassoux from this vantage point to grasp more clearly the fundamental difference between them, which has often been overlooked in favor of a superficial defense of either side.

2. **The Principle of Unreason**

To counter Kant's „ptolemaic counter-revolution" (Meillassoux 2006, 119) Meillassoux' is less interested in refuting correlationism outright by proposing a principle external to critical philosophy – which in turn would fall back behind Kant and subsequently Meillassoux' ambitions – but to demonstrate the inner inconsistency of the correlationist position. It will be in turn exactly this point of inconsistency, a crack up between thought and being inherent to the correlationist claims, that allows for Meillassoux' own attempt at reformulating and resurrecting the 'great outdoors' for philosophy. The "deadly argument" (Gratton 2014, 52), as Peter Gratton

calls it, *After Finitude* presents aims to clarify the connection between correlationism and the principle of sufficient reason (PSR), in that the former has to take refuge to the latter in an attempt to maintain consistency, while at the same time the failure of either one of them to ground the other, reveals a deeper contingency at the heart of the entanglement of thought and being itself. The correlationist, by relying on a version of the PSR which in turn is grounded in the ungrounded facticity of the correlation itself, exposes the factuality or necessary contingency of any ground. Hence the PSR leads to the principle of unreason, which in turn will recuperate the absolute in the epistemological as well as ontological register.

In order to justify this claim, that "the thought of a radical otherwise is a non-correlationist thought, and it is a thought of an absolute" (Roffe 2012, 62), as Roffe summarizes, Meillassoux aims to *demonstrate* it through the confrontation of four emblematic figures on the topic of radical otherness, namely post mortem reality. The overtly Leibnizian rationalist begins the discussion by asserting the necessity of a post mortem existence and the necessity of the proliferation of experience after death – even if it is not yet possible to determine the nature of such experiences – by referring to the nature of God as necessary being and himself as creation. Hence, the theist concludes, because God is not only necessary, but is also necessarily *what* he is – including benevolence, omnipotence and omniscience – a life after death is conceivable *formally*, insofar as the absolute, satisfying the PSR, is conceivable as well. Here, the atheist metaphysician weighs in a Spinozian manner[ii], attacking the speculation of the theist by holding that the same necessary absolute, conditioning our finite existence as material beings, is at the same time the absolute grounds for our vanishing. The atheist (or pantheist) metaphysician, while also recognizing that the PSR is conceivable, proceeds in a different direction, namely the inconceivability of a post mortem experience. The discussion between these two 'speculative metaphysicians' is moot at best, since they, as Meillassoux points out, operate on the same metaphysical misconception, that the ultimate ground (or principle) for something to be what it is and what it is not does not only obtain absolutely, but that such a reason is intelligible, at least in principle.[iii]

By introducing the correlationist philosopher of a Kantian variety, the argument proceeds by now limiting the access to the absolute by restricting it to pure indeterminacy. The two metaphysicians, according to this agnostic thinker, were uncritically claiming knowledge to something inaccessible, insofar as only what can be an object of experience can also be an object of knowledge, and since experience presupposes being alive, no claims about existence after death are possible.[iv] Claiming the immortality of the soul is, as Kant reveals in his criticism of rational psychology in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* not only speculative but antinomical, insofar as reason following its speculative interest without bounds gets caught up in irreconcilable contradictions, since no experience could validate the claims. Since reason in the critical project is neither the Cartesian natural light nor a participation in the divine intellect, but a capacity of the human mind, the *Critiques* sought to limit its application to the natural right, or in other worlds, to determine the rules for its legitimate and illegitimate uses according to the possibility of deriving knowledge solely from experience. The consequences for Meillassoux' argument become apparent, if we look at Kant's introduction of *seemingly* absolute principles as ideas of reason; God, freedom and immortality. Although they are no objects of knowledge themselves, since they can be no object of experience, they are employed where knowledge is possible. They have only pragmatic and regulative function, guiding the organization of experiences according to the speculative interest to attain a maximum in systematicity of knowledge, which in turn is possible and necessariry because "[h]uman reason is by its nature architectonic" (Kant 2007, A 474/B 502). Hence the absolute can only be, insofar as it is conceived as fit to human cognition and even if it remains as a lure for reason to lose itself in speculation, such temptations are rerouted towards the possibility of future knowledge according to the conditions of transcendental apperception. Consequently, the PSR becomes relative, insofar as he precisely criticizes his speculative predecessors for not limiting their claims to knowledge of the absolute to what can be derived from experience. He however reformulates the PSR in the "Transcendental Analytic" (Second Analogy section) of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* because he needs a principle able to guarantee, that all instances in time pass in

an orderly and homogenous manner. Famously, he does so by referring to a "real" outside of consciousness, giving the inner sense a point of reference outside itself in order to determine and order the succession of instances. While such a "real" outside is constitutive of self-consciousness, it is only considered as and within the limits of this constituting function. Hence, by introducing the real, he at the same time limits the otherness of being to a function of the constitution of consciousness[v], in other words, being is for the human.

It is here, that the subjective idealist, the fourth figure enters the stage, loudly proclaiming "my mind, if not my body, is immortal" (Meilassoux 2006, 55), doing away with Kantian critical caution and speculative hubris. Following the Idealist, all the other three still proclaim more than they are able to proof, insofar as they pretend to be able to conceive of, at least formally, a state or entity so completely different from our capacity to think it, that it cannot be thought, e.g. Death, God, the In-Itself. And, since it is impossible to conceive of myself as not existing in the way I exist now and since any reference to such a state contradicts itself for the same reason, no radical alterity (hence radical inconceivability) is possible. The Idealist arrives at the immortality of himself not by reference to any necessary entity outside of thought, but by highlighting the inner paradox between the phenomena and the noumenon. Since the latter could be no object of knowledge within the realm of the former, the knowledge and justification of its existence is itself contentious. While it is debatable, how to read the Kantian dualism of phenomena and noumena, if we simply consider the contrary but both paradigmatic readings of Stern (cf. Stern 2000) or Allison (cf. Allison 2014), we should consider Hegel's critique of Kant as the paradigmatic case here. If we want to state the correlation of thought and being as Kant did, then, as Hegel points out, the transcendence or autonomy of a thing-in-itself incommensurable to any for-us is contradictory. Rather, Hegel's solution consists in doing away with the separation of thinking and being, which then is bound together by a correlation to then sublate this very split into a moment of thought itself. Being and thought are inseparable in this case, since every separation appears as a moment in thought as determinate negation, already encompassing being and thought in its movement. As such, this is the paradigmatic case of what Meillassoux has dubbed 'strong correlationism', absolutizing the correlation itself by radicalizing the inner tendencies of Kant's 'weak correlationism'. By doing so, the application and function of the PSR changes radically. Hegel particularly finds the fault with the metaphysical speculative use of the PSR – for him especially in Jacobi – not in the illegitimate use of reason, but in the unjustified assumption, that there is a necessary being at all, that is invariant and atemporal. Hence the problem of classical metaphysics, even extending to Kant, was the separation in the One (absolute being) and the many (derived being) without making the reconciliation of the two halves a movement *internal* to both.[vi] Inversely however, if no such unchanging ground can be claimed to exist, then, as Hegel rightly follows, every necessity is itself contingent[vii], bringing him close to Meillassoux' own position, while at the same time being its inversion.[viii]

Now, Meillassoux locates the pivotal point for his own argument in a rebuttal the Kantian philosopher could give to the subjective idealist. He is mistaken, the weak correlationist can claim, in asserting, that one cannot conceive of a state radically different from the current on. Even if it proves impossible to think one's own annihilation, the absence of any ground for being and being *what* one is right now, makes it impossible to give any grounds that would prevent such an event. The possibility of one's not-being at any moment is radically conceivable as the extension of the principle of the necessity of the contingency of any such grounds for being, what and how one is. Hence, Meillassoux turns the epistemological limitation of the correlationist philosopher into an epistemic strength. Insofar all reliable predictions about the future rest upon conditions, which are out of our grasp, because any knowledge is limited to our current cognition, the unpredictability of the future and hence the impossibility to rule out, that at any future point in time one might be annihilated without reason, is a certainty.

At last then, the speculative realist makes his appearance, claiming that both the weak correlationist as well as the speculative metaphysician had gotten part of the answer right. It is true, Meillassoux claims, that the

discussion must revolve around the absolute, as something intelligible, as the metaphysicians had proposed, but they were wrong to assume, that this absolute was a necessary being, as the weak correlationist already contended. The latter is, so *After Finitude*'s argument goes, correct in rebuffing the subjective idealist's attempt at absolutizing the correlation by insisting on the possibility of conceiving of one's being radically otherwise. The finitude, preventing any reliable knowledge of the future and hence making this option possible, is then however misinterpreted by the correlationist as a finitude stemming from the correlation and the therefore imposed limits of transcendental apperception as the condition for any knowledge and experience. Inversely, the speculative realist does not take the impossibility to rule out an unprincipled being otherwise to be simply an epistemic deficit, but rather a positive determination of the absolute or even *the* absolute as such. The Kantian philosopher might very well argue, that Meillassoux falls prey to the same hubris as the speculative metaphysicians, making claims about a realm which is beyond our access to it. But here, the speculative philosopher can strengthen his argument, insofar as the attack of the weak correlationist again pays for the distinction between the for-us and in-itself with the introduction of a "fault line" (Meillassoux 2006, 59), which creates a real which is not dependent on the for-us and not constraint by it. Hence it is the "absolute capacity-to-be-other relative to the given"[ix] the weak correlationist has to assume to make his point, which in turn enables one to think something outside the correlation; the autonomy of the in-itself. Since, as before mentioned, the Kantian philosopher cannot fall back on a subjective idealist position, because – by its own admission – such a position is untannable, he has no consistent fallback strategy. Here, Meillassoux arrives at the centerpiece of his argument. The conceivability of a radical otherwise, implied by the weak correlationist, enables one to think something outside the correlation, which is to say, the absolute itself. Since there is no reason for any future state to be predictable by any state now, the future is radically open and yet undetermined and undeterminable. Hence, since correlationism is unable to provide grounds for its own necessity, it is exactly this inability which Meillassoux takes to be the absolute necessity and the necessity of the absolute. As Hallward sums it up: "Nothing is necessary, apart from the necessity that nothing be necessary." (Hallward 2011, 51) This is the *principle* of unreason (PUR). Still, this PUR is a logical and rational claim, equally engendered and executed by reason as a capacity and hence, Meillassoux arrives at the most counter-intuitive point: "The Principle of Sufficient Reason is thus another name for the irrational […]" (Meillassoux 2006, 61).

3. **Deleuze' Absolutization of the Correlation**

Superficially, nothing would be closer to Deleuze' heart than Meillassoux' claimant that: "contingency *alone* is necessary" (Meillassoux 2006, 108). We can find this sentiment reiterated all across his work, but nothing probably more pronounced than in *What is Philosophy?*, which is expressly written as a book against the ideology of necessity and urges philosophers to embrace the chaos, the role of the dice, in short the necessary contingency that is being to create concepts rather than searching for invariable grounds (cf. Deleuze 1996, 33). It might be exactly this proximity and Meillassoux' reliance on Deleuze' ontology, that in the end creates the diametrical opposition the former will take up against the latter. From the vantage point of the absolute as a "hyper-chaos" as we have already seen, we can understand and already infer the points of critique with Deleuze, which are threefold.

Firstly, he accuses Deleuze of a "vitalist hypostazation" (Meillassoux 2006, 64) of the correlation, e.g. Deleuze conceives everything (even ancestral events) as a correlate of 'a Life' and is hence a strong correlationist. One might understand this point as a repetition of Badiou's contention with Deleuze vitalism as a quasi-ontotheological metaphysics, insofar as life/becoming becomes a new ground and principle, betraying the basic tenants of Deleuze' own ontology (Badiou 1999, 70-72). This however does not clarify the nature of the correlation, Deleuze is allegedly guilty of, since on the surface, life does not appear in Deleuze as a metaphysical principle neither does it imply a similar structure as the other strong correlationists (like Husserl, Heidegger or Wittgenstein). While *Subtraction and Contraction* (cf. Meillassoux 2007) and *Spectral Dilemma* (cf.

Meillassoux 2008) both contain clues to better understand the relationship between Deleuze and Meillassoux and shed light on the critique, the heavy focus on the Bergsonian side of Deleuze discussed in these texts, blocks the real potential of this accusation. If we are however willing to take the detour through Ray Brassier's critique of the same (or at least similar point) in Deleuze, we can see the correlation clearer. Brassier reconstructs Deleuze through his theory of individuation with the explicit aim to demonstrate Deleuze' subjectivism. He argues that the Deleuzean encounter[x], as the starting point of individuation, triggers the discordant exercise of the faculties, pushing every faculty to its limits and it is "through this transcendent-discordant as opposed to the empirical-concordant exercise that each faculty accesses its own problematic-ontological dimension […]" (Brassier 2007, 169). Every faculty is hence confronted with what is not experienced (sentiendum) in sensibility, is not remembered (memorandum) in memory and remains unthought (cogitandum) within thought. Through this transcendental deduction, Deleuze reveals, that the sensible has a privileged position in the series, since it is the place of the encounter, enabling the other two dimensions: "From the intensity to thought, it is always by means of an intensity that thought comes to us" (Deleuze 2014, 144). Hence, he concludes, the answer to the question, who it is, that thinks, is: an intensity. Brassier seeks to demonstrate this, by insisting that Deleuze claims that actualization unfolds along three series: spatial, temporal and psychic. As we have seen, thinking is engendered by an encounter with an intensity. This plays a crucial role in individuation, since it is constituted through the implementation of virtual ideas into actual physical systems. [xi] Such ideas in turn are the result of thinking, which breaks with the present and orients organization towards the future, hence individuation is the creation of the new. However, since ideas are not-reducible to the sensible (intensities), because they are not immediately encountered in the present, something is needed to perform the thinking necessary for creating the dimension of the future individuation hinges on. This is why, according to Brassier, Deleuze introduces "larval-subjects" (Deleuze 2014, 78) to account for his spatio-temporal dynamism in individuation, while not losing intensity to representational consciousness.[xii] It is intensity that thinks, but as a latent form of consciousness. Hence, in Deleuze ontology "ideality and sensibility, ultimately converge in a double genesis of thinking and being" (Brassier 2007, 171), while thinking is still in need of subjectivity or proto-subjectivity. In short, a panpsychism is necessary to conflate being and thinking, but is itself only justified by said conflation, from which follows the circular structure of conditioning typical for strong correlationism. [xiii] Ultimately, due to the univocity of being, there can be no being without thinking and the other way around in Deleuze. In a twisted way, Deleuze could be construed as a subjective idealist a lá Hegel. At first glance, this seems to invite the critique of the speculative realist, since „[t]here is contingent being independent of us, and this contingent being has no reason to be of a subjective nature" (Meillassoux 2012, 62). While this warrants Meillassoux' suspicions against Deleuze, the question is, how this identity of being and thinking (which might not even be a correlation) actually constitutes a critical opening for Meillassoux, or in other words, where this kind of subjective idealism Deleuze proposes actually contradicts or limits contingency. This exact moment is what we can make out as Meillassoux' second point of contention with Deleuze metaphysics of becoming.

Secondly, given that there is only the necessity of contingency and – as we have just seen in Deleuze – there is a double genesis of being and thinking, there will always be becoming. However, as *After Finitude* attempts to demonstrate, becoming always involves contradictory entities, which cannot be otherwise and are hence necessary. As such, contradictory entities limit the hyper-chaos, since they introduce something non-contingent into being. Further even, if becoming is ubiquitous, and therefore there are only contradictory entities (insofar as Deleuze sets out to show, that identity is a transcendental illusion, or a trick played by a restrictive image of thought), there is nothing in Deleuze' ontology, that could be otherwise than it is. Everything in an ontology of becoming is necessary, limiting the hyper-chaos even more than Kant's weak correlationism. It is important to note, that the *figure,* as Meillassoux calls the principle of non-contradiction, does not ground the PUR – as is often asserted and made into a critique of Meillassoux – but is in fact a consequence of the assertion of being as hyper-chaos. *If* the PUR is asserted, *then* the principle of non-contradiction must be in place. Otherwise the PUR would be limited and therefore not the absolute. This does not mean, that one must

assert the principle of non-contradiction to arrive at the proposition of being as hyper-chaos, but one has to accept the logical constraint of non-contradiction once being is already identifies as contingency.

The third point, then, follows from the first two: if Deleuze champions a strong version of correlationism and if, due to the reduction of being to becoming, everything cannot be otherwise, then he introduces a new version of the PSR. Even if such a principle is intensive or an unground (the contingency of necessity) it still does "fulfill all the requirements of a truly sufficient reason" (Deleuze 2006, 49) and hence for Meillassoux, does not arrive at the necessity of contingency proper. Especially *Substraction and Contraction* shows how Meillassoux locates this tendency in ontologies of becoming to irrationality in an overreliance on Bergson's élan vital and the related hostility to rationality, which is all too easily discarded as pure calculation.

4. **Becoming and/as Ground(ing)**

A rebuttal to the points one through three by producing evidence of the existence of passages in Deleuze, which reject or contradict the accusations might be possible, but is also at the same time a moot point, since it does not tackle the problem at hand. One ought to take the speculative realist's argument against Deleuzean vitalism serious. Therefore, we will attempt to make the fault lines between the two speculative thinkers clearer.

While van Tuinen in "Difference and Speculation" aims at the right base conflict between Deleuze and Meillassoux, the conflict about the primacy of reason (and hence logic) or life (and hence becoming) as the post-ontotheological grounds for speculative philosophy, his own argument seems slightly off base. After briefly sketching the consequences of such a confrontation in terms of time and matter, his ultimate argument however for Deleuze' position is restricted to a defense of becoming, in that Deleuze' does not champion a "principle" in the traditional sense at all (cf. van Tuinen 2014, 76). As also Badiou's attacks on Deleuze concerning exactly this point have already demonstrated, such a discussion is not really geared towards philosophical arguments but strategic objectives relating to attempts to carve out a standpoint against one another. We should however still concur with van Tuinen's evaluation, that the problem between the two philosophers concerns the relation of reason and ground and hence is primarily architectonic. We will elaborate from there.

Let us consider as an example, the relation to mathematics both represent. While both endorse the usefulness of mathematics for philosophy, Deleuze mostly works with differential calculus and Riemannian geometry, while Meillassoux relies on Cantorian set theory (inspired by his teacher Badiou). While the differential calculus allows Deleuze to fuse the being of the sensible, understood as the differential problems (intensities) posed to us, (cf. Bryant 2008, 108) and forced thinking, understood as a function of the unfolding of these intensities over a series of onto-problematic dimensions, he establishes a necessary synchronicity of being and thinking. Set theory on the other hand, leads Meillassoux to question this assumption, since – as Badiou has already demonstrated[xiv] – it only relies on the quantitative aspects of being and can circumevent the qualitative, or empirical side completely and still attain secure knowledge. This difference in choice of mathematical backbones of their ontology already reveals two related fault lines. Firstly, while Deleuze wants to integrate sensibility and intelligibility into one operation, Meillassoux seeks to pit mathematical intelligibility against sensibility, as Ray Brassier reiterates (cf. Brassier 2007b, 41) Hence, while Deleuze is still faithful to a version of the overcoming the difference of rationalism and empiricism, Meillassoux opens this debate up to take a firmly rationalist stance, even if not with the traditional metaphysical disposition. From this the second rift is apparent. Since for the univocity of being in the Deleuzean sense, being and thinking are inseparable, for Meillassoux, they are – in a paradoxically Kantian fashion – asynchronous, in that we can make true statements about being without thinking. One might say, that, while Deleuze holds on to a metaphysical project of the (systematic) intelligibility of the (unsystematic) chaos by uniting both in becoming and creating, Meillassoux has abandoned such metaphysical hopes. The distinction following from the difference in mathematics used, hence comes down to a *decision* between two versions of contingency: the fullness of sensible being which thinks through

problematization, circumventing logic (by instating their own conditions in occurring) and therefore any necessity for a reason for being what something is, or the lack of a logical reason for a being, to be what something is and not be or become otherwise, circumventing the empirical trappings of assuming the reason from given (apparent) stability. It is possible, that such a decision, as Laruelle has proven exhaustively, cannot be made on claims of primacy of origin, but on proposals for the use and usefulness of the axioms accepted, hence through practical much more than speculative reason.

This opposition plays out in different dimensions. If we take for example the notion of matter Meillassoux' "speculative *materialism*" harbors, we can easily see, that he uses the domain of the material and the domain of the logical convertibly or interchangeably, which allows him to project the *logical* lack of a reason into *material* being. As Peter Hallward, repeating an accusation made by Brassier (cf. Brassier 2007, 93-4), has already noted, such a reduction transforms the hyper-chaos into an "empty and indeterminate postulate" (Hallward 2011, 138), or as could also be said in light of the proximity of Meillassoux' position to Fichte's 'intellectual intuition', it is pure but ineffective formalism. This accusation must to be understood correctly however. Insofar as Meillassoux' argument is geared firstly, towards cutting the necessary relation between the possibility and its realization, because everything could always be otherwise and secondly, towards discrediting the notion of possibility as such for being only a copy of the presented stability in experience, Deleuze would whole heartedly agree. The fusion of logical necessity (or the lack of reason for being something and not otherwise) and abstract being (the hyper-chaos) might indeed be successfully done, as Meillassoux has demonstrated, even avoiding correlation and representation. However – and Meillassoux realizes this problem in his attempt several times[xv] – he then has no recourse to actually existing material instances or better to their actual materializations. Even if he is right, and there is no reason for anything being what it is and no (even differential) ground can be assumed, then, his argument does not explain anything in the material world and has purely limitative and negative function, barring *any* attempt at systematically thinking the real genesis of the given. While such a critical disposition is useful as a corrective, Meillassoux' position seems to remain either in it or tries to free itself with rather itself irrational leaps.[xvi] As Grant has argued, Meillassoux paradoxically manouvers himself into the same pitfall as Kant, only considering a logical instead of a synthetic notion of matter (Grant 2006, 114). Deleuze however shows that avoiding the ontological argument, which for Meillassoux is the master argument for the PSR still operative in contemporary philosophy, does not necessitate the equation of abstract being with logic, rather such equation fuels it. He argues, that the ontological argument already is build on the misunderstanding of the relation of possibility and realization, while latter is understood as a poorer version of the former. Deleuze sees this argument as derived from a false abstraction from 'what is' to 'what could have been' in a retrograde movement aimed at introducing a lack into being. But, only if what is, actually is, one could speak of what could have been. Hence the real creates the possible, not the other way around, which he then formulates in his movement from virtuality to actuality circumventing the possible. Meillassoux takes recourse to this conception several times and at various points, it seems like he could even have gone the transcendental empiricist route.

Concerning the problem of time and becoming however, the opposition between the speculative realist and the transcendental empiricist becomes a more pressing concern, as Roffe as rightly noted (cf. Roffe 2012, 57). This problem revolves around the status of the PUR in relation to the principle of becoming. For Deleuze, time is difference, insofar as the temporal difference governs both identity and difference, because the former is a repetition of the latter, serially determining it, without ever fully determining it as a self-identical being. Meillassoux however makes a distinction between *t*ime, as empirical change and *T*ime, as the PUR governed by nothing.[xvii] As we have already seen, becoming is problematic for Meillassoux, insofar contradictory beings impede the absolute status of contingency. However, the imposition of becoming to the PUR is even taken further by Meillassoux in his assertion that, if *nothing* has a reason to stay what it is and could always be otherwise at any moment, then it also follows, that there is no reason for anything to change,

hence *everything* could stay what it is for no reason. Therefore, the PUR allows for a 'Time without becoming'. Again, while such a possibility is given logically, as for example Shoemakers famous thought experiment shows (cf. Shoemaker 1969), the question is, if it can also be materialized. The entry in such a "Kingdom of Death"[xviii], where everything stays, what it is without reason, seems to be plagued with inconsistencies however. Since, what it means to be something and not something else (identity) can only be given *in time,* as an identity over time. As Deleuze shows in the beginning of the second chapter of *Difference of Repetition,* the very notion of identity is predicated upon being repeated *as* the same. If something only occurs only once, nothing can be said about its identity or difference, since both are variable subscription both epistemologically and ontologically speaking. Without having a point of reference, it might be, that something changes in the next moment or not. As Roffe does, we should for that matter be content with giving an anhypothetical argument, insofar as the primacy of time cannot be proven positively, we can however show, that it is irreducible to other principles.

5. **Almost an Endnote**

We have started our investigation by considering confronting Deleuze with the critique brought forth against him by Quentin Meillassoux, especially in his *After Finitude,* which seemed pressing for the two-fold reason, that Deleuze is increasingly read as a realist philosopher avant la lettre and the shire strangeness of the accusation of idealism pitted against him. We have proceeded by first showing how Meillassoux derives his argument for the principle of reason by tracing his reconstruction of a fictional discussion about post mortem existence by figures from various paradigmatic positions. While Meillassoux agreed with the speculative metaphysician, that the discussion must revolve around the absolute, which the Kantian tradition had constrained to human cognition, he still criticizes their reliance on a necessary entity to be the absolute. In the rebuttal of the weak correlationist to the subjective idealist, that we can indeed conceive ourselves as otherwise than we are now, a fact that the subjective idealist denies, he finds unintentionally the real absolute. Since one can conceive of oneself as otherwise, because of the logical lack of any reason to be what one is, a restriction brought on by the limitation of the absolute to human cognition, thinking this absence of reason is a non-correlative thought. This lack of reason is then identified as the outside of thought; being as (necessary) contingency.

From this vantage point, we could formulate the three points of contention Meillassoux could level against Deleuze: firstly, that he is a strong correlationist, secondly, that he restricts the PUR by proposing necessary (because contradictory) entities and thirdly, that he therefore champions an unrestricted version of the PSR. Rather than rebuffing every point individually, we tried to clarify the problem giving rise to such concerns. By comparing their preferred uses of mathematics, we identified the problem as an opposition between the two ideas of the relation of reason and ground. While Deleuze attempts to think the synchronicity of being and thinking *materially,* Meillassoux is concerned with demonstrating the asynchronicity between being and thinking *logically*. We have traced this opposition through the domain of matter, claiming that Meillassoux' argument leads to a pure but ineffective formalism without any explanatory power at the level of actual material processes or the genesis of the given. Moving to time, we have tried to give an anhypothetical argument, showing that time is not subject to the PUR, if anything it is a consequence of the transcendental status of temporal difference.

This tracing of fault lines, necessitates future investigations, not only in the relation of Deleuze and Meillassoux, but into the relation of reason and ground in contemporary realism as such, as much as it calls for experiments with sensibility and reason in realist thought to come.

Notes

[i] Cf. for example: Bell, Jeff: "Between Realism and Anti-realism: Deleuze and the Spinozist Tradition in

Philosophy", in: *Deleuze and Guattari Studies Journal,* Volume 5, Issue 1, 1-17. DeLanda, Manuel: *Inensive Science and Virtual Philosophy.* Bloomsbury Academic 2002. Grant, Iain Hamilton: *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling.* Bloomsbury Academic 2006.

[ii] Given, that we read only the first four books of Spinoza's "Ethics" and ignore the possibility of the "sub specie aethernitatis".

[iii] Or at the very least, it is conceivable *enough* to either deduce the existence or non-existence of myself after death. (cf. Meillassoux 2006, 55)

[iv] Even if the theist hints to the possibility of post mortem experience, neither the possibility, the formal structure nor the content of such experiences could be the object of knowledge, while one experiences the world as alive. Hence, since the experiences after death cannot be derived from the experience while being alive, the experience of a life after death cannot be an object of knowledge.

[v] While Kant himself describes himself as a realist (or as he puts it as a reaction to the Göttingen Review, as providing the only possible "empirical realism"), this claim was immediately contentious to his contemporaries and successors, like Maimon, Schulze and Reinhold.

[vi] In Kant, as Deleuze later point out too, the determination always functions externally to the sensible manifold without any internal connection to the concepts. Cf. Deleuze, Gilles: *Kant's Critical Philosophy. The Doctrine of the Faculties.* Bloomsbury Academic 2008, 71.

[vii] As Raoni Padui points out, Hegel is using the term "contingency" in at least two senses. One referring to the contingency implied in the actual, to might have been otherwise, depending on circumstance and one referring to the groundlessness of every actual being to be. While the former sense still takes recourse to the external factors of beings, the latter is internal to beings, as not fully determined by the external factors – hence not fully grounded by them – but groundless. Cf. Raoni Padui: "The Necessity of Contingency and the Powerlessness of Nature. Hegels two Senses of Contigency", in: *Idealistic Studies.* Volume 40, Issue 3 (2010).

[viii] Meillassoux will abandon the Hegel exactly for the ambiguity in the notions of "contingency" claiming that Hegel's stronger notion of contingency as groundlessness links it to the irrational to enable Hegel to sublate even these instances into the Whole, retroactively making everything necessarily what it is, but allowing for contradictory entities. The contingency presented in Hegel, Meillassoux claims, is therefore not a contingency following from contingency, but contingency determined by something outside of it. How solid this argument is however is debatable, as Josef Moshe notes (Cf. Moshe, Josef: "The Night in which all Dinosaurs wear Nightcaps. A Supplement to Zizek's critique of Meillassoux", in: *International Zizek Studies*, Volume 7, Issue 3 (2013).) Therefore, as John van van Houdt points out: "Indeed, the minimal line of separation between Hegelian and Meillassouxian versions of the thesis of the necessity of contingency is worth investigating further." (cf. van Houdt, John: "The Necessity of Contingency of The Contingency of Necessity", in: *Cosmos and History. The Journal of Social and Natural Philosophy.* Volume 7, Issue 1 (2011), 133.)

[ix] Meillassoux: *After Finitude,* 58-9.

[x] Understood as the „confrontation with the paradoxical instance which defines the being of its proper object." Brassier, Ray: *Nihil Unbound. Enlightenment and Extinction.* Palgrave Macmillian 2007, 169.

[xi] Deleuze takes this to be the main focus of his magnum opus *Difference and Repetition,* insofar as it gives an account for the diversity of being, without falling back into Kantian constraints.

[xii] This reading of Deleuze attempted by Brassier is however heavily contested. Cf. Woodward, Ashley: "Nonhuman Life", in: Stark, Hannah / Roffe, Jon (eds.): *Deleuze and the Non-Human.* Palgrave Macmillian 2015,

27-30.

[xiii] Panpsychism is in contemporary discourse mostly considered via an abductive argument (by Strawson or Brünrup). Deleuze – at least in Brassier's reading, seems to pose the proposition of panpsychism as an abductive argument to explain the identity of being and thinking, according to the principle of the univocity of being, but then shifts gears to assert this mechanism as the not merely explanatory ground, but ontological grounds grounds for the identity of nous and physis.

[xiv] Mullarkey makes this point in Badiou very prominent. Cf. Mullarkey, John: *Post-Continental Philosophy. An Outline.* Continuum 2006, 87.

[xv] Take for example to problem of emergence as purely random events. Cf. Meillassoux: "Spectral Dilemma", 7.

[xvi] Consider Meillassoux' passages about the resurrection of the dead in the name of justice: Cf. Meillassoux, Quentin: "The Immanence of the World beyond", in: Cunningham, Conor / Candler, Peter (eds.): *The Grandeur of Reason*. SCM Press 2010, 454.

[xvii] More precisely, Meillassoux states, that hyper-chaos is *like* time. The question revolves now around the nature of this "likeness".

[xviii] As Daniel Sacilotto writes poignately about the relation of mathematics to the absolute in Meillassoux: "In so far as it allows the thought of that which exceeds the horizon of our experience and existence, mathematics grants access to 'the Kingdom of death', which is to say, it can think the Cartesian in-itself or the absolute, that which is not a mere correlate of thought." (Sacilotto, Daniel: "Death" in: Gratton, Peter: *The Meillassoux Dictionary*. Edinburgh University Press 2015, 52.).

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